FLESH AND FURY

A fistful of treasures, hardly touched: that sums up the golden marketing opportunities available to Twentieth Century Fox as it prepared to promote Clive Barker's Nightbreed. And yet, according to the director, the American launch missed chances and courted disaster, publicising Nightbreed as a slasher movie! Will the British premiere be better judged? Mark Salisbury asked Clive Barker the billion dollar question.

Shuna Sassi, one of the Breed: beautiful, ferocious and prickly

If there is one film that British fans of the fantastique are eagerly awaiting, it has to be Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*. The second directorial outing from the horror/fantasy genre's wunderkind, this adaptation of Barker's best-selling novel *Cabal* has sailed such a stormy transition from screenplay to screen that the problems encountered by its director are in danger of overshadowing the finished film.

Intimations of trouble first surfaced last Christmas when word filtered back from America that additional scenes were being shot, and that the film was being re-edited. A disappointing box office response prompted further concern.

Additional footage, an alternative ending involving Decker's resurrection (based on US preview audiences' demands), a change of editor (Richard Marden going out, to be replaced by Mark Goldblatt who cut *The Terminator* and directed *The Punisher*) and a period of testing hell, were all foisted upon an increasingly disillusioned Barker over a period of three months as he hurried to meet a February release date. These factors conspired to distort his vision to such a degree that the film which emerged from the director's postproduction 'nightmare' (his word) in America was not the poetic hymn to the monstrous that he'd originally envisaged. At least 20 minutes — of material considered extraneous by Fox executives — are missing from the film we saw in rough cut form last September; scenes which slowed the pace below the frantic have been pared to the bone, leaving a slick rollercoaster ride.

SCREAM AND SHOUT

Nightbreed, it has to be said, was beset with problems almost from day one. The ousting of original producer Chris Figg midway through shooting threw the already problematic production into further disarray, but the difficulties endured this side of the Atlantic were insubstantial compared to those encountered by Barker during postproduction in Los Angeles.

Barker's highly critical and very public lambasting of the Hollywood system may, to many, sound like sour grapes, complaints by an indignant director trying to save face after his film's relative failure at the US box office. But the treatment dealt out to Barker is indicative of that which befalls both low and high profile filmmakers every day in Hollywood. Recently, much has been written of the abrasive, arrogant, dictatorial style of producer Joel Silver, whose insulation of director Renny Harlin from studio pressure on *Die Hard 2*, when the movie's spiralling budget was reaching ridiculous proportions, is now legendary, and bears testimony to the predicament faced by the affable Barker when thrown into a milieu as hostile, objectionable and foreign as any of those described in his fiction.

'It's terrible to say it,' says Barker, in contemplative mood while eagerly awaiting *Nightbreed*'s UK release, 'but I think that a lot of people in these kinds of systems respect somebody who will yell and scream and be irrational and throw things, more than they will somebody who will come in and talk quietly, intellectually and deal honourably with them.

'I didn't have a producer who yelled and screamed and kicked arse. And despite the superfice of sophistication that that community has, it really works at gutter level. People bully, people connive, this is nothing you haven't heard about Hollywood before, but there it is — and they lie.'

ANTI-VALUES

'I want to make movies, I don't want to make movies with dishonourable people. I think I'm probably going to have to once in a while. I would prefer to know the systems better. I made *Hellraiser* here, I made *Nightbreed* here. I walked over there to finish postproduction on the movie and discovered a whole different system of values, almost anti-values.

'The politics got so byzantine that I didn't know who was stabbing me in the back, who was stabbing me in the eye — but they all had knives'

'The politics got so byzantine that I didn't know who was stabbing me in the back, who was stabbing me in the eye — but they all had knives. All those things happen to directors all the time, but because books aren't like that, it came as a real shock to realise that people would just lie straight to your face and there were times when I thought I really don't know what I'm doing this for. I don't know why I'm bothering to deal with these people, they are total bastards.'

Barker's disgust with the system doesn't end there. After a final test screening at Redondo Beach, California, the 500-strong audience reacted with universal delight. 'I came out of there thinking, 'My God, we've done it. They love it.' Which is one of the mysteries why Twentieth Century Fox (the distributors) didn't get behind it. If it didn't test well I could understand them dumping it, but the audience had a great time.'

Fox's failure to grasp the movie's motivation manifested itself in a misdirected marketing strategy. The film was released with a retouched *Bad Dreams* poster inscribed with the immortal ad line: 'Lori thought she knew everything about her boyfriend...she was wrong', and promoted as a stalk and slash film, something it most definitely is not. That the film wasn't even previewed to critics illustrated how little faith Fox had in their picture; as did their reluctance to release monster photos to the press lest it was mistaken

as being a film about monsters.

'When I saw the way they were selling the movie, I freaked out and said: 'What are you doing? This isn't the movie', and was given all kinds of excuses... 'Well there isn't time to change it, we have to release now'. And there was a very low awareness of the movie and they knew it. The recognition of Cronenberg was smaller than I thought. They knew they hadn't prepared the audiences for the existence of the movie, nobody knew the movie was coming, when the movie was advertised it wasn't the movie that we'd made. When the movie was out it was put out with posters that wholly misrepresented the content, and then of course it was gone.'

EVIL MONSTERS

The realisation of the depth of misunderstanding came when one of the heads of Morgan Creek (the production company) remarked to Barker: 'If you're not careful, some people are going to *like* the monsters'.

'Here's a guy who had presumably read the screenplay at some point or other who didn't *get* what had been done at all.

'I was crazy as a loon at that point. I didn't know what to do, but the thing is it's no use yelling, 'You stupid fucker', you have to sit down and say, 'Listen, this is the movie we've made, this is why we've made the movie...

'Part of the problem is that people think so generically, they think 'horror movie': that anything that's ugly or monstrous is bad. Rex Reed said on TV: 'I like my monsters to be evil. So I don't like this movie because I like my monsters to be evil'. So no room for ambiguity, no room for Quasimodo, no room, apparently, for Frankenstein's monster, no room for all those wonderful creatures for whom we feel ambiguity, like King Kong. He liked his monsters evil, so fuck this movie.'

'If you are dealing with a movie that is a little bit quirky, a little bit strange, then people have to make creative decisions, and the trouble with making creative decisions, if you're a person who wants to keep their job, is you could be wrong.

'Our little *Nightbreed* comes along and it's a one weekend job which is going to work or it isn't, and if it doesn't who cares? It's a movie made by someone who made this other quirky S&M horror movie, who isn't one of the community, who's made this faintly European Hammer-horrorish sort of movie, and it's got Cronenberg in it and they're not that sure about Cronenberg either for a whole bunch of other reasons. And it's got all these weird creatures and we're supposed to like them, and no stars and it's violent, and it's weird and it inverts the moralities.

'The head of marketing at Morgan Creek never even saw the movie all the way through, and he was the guy publicising the movie! He could never make it through the film, it disgusted and distressed him. He said to me at one point, 'You're an intelligent man, why do you make these movies? They're disgusting and horrible'. And this guy was *selling* the movie!

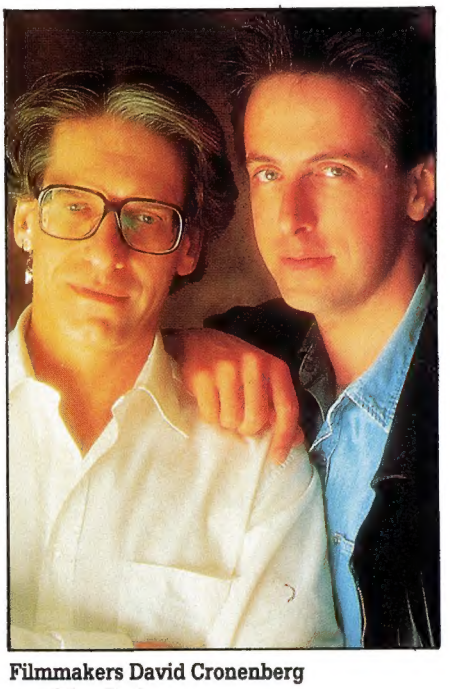
'They were just incredibly confused as to how to market the picture. It's a monster movie and they were slightly ashamed of it being a monster movie. They were uneasy with the whole thing. And there is no way of articulating to people who just don't get it, what the pleasures of a monster movie are.'

WEIRDNESS QUOTIENT

Is he proud of the final film? 'It's more of a rollercoaster ride than originally intended. I was surprised at how little time the US audience wanted to spend with dialogue when I tested the movie. The longer cut frankly didn't work for them. They wanted sensation after sensation after sensation. But it's roundabouts and swings in a way, because there's an element of excitement now in the movie. What happens now is the movie gets running and just never stops. I don't think it bores anybody, it moves way too fast to bore.

'But I've made my second Hammer movie, and it's a very different kind of movie to *Hellraiser*, but it was nevertheless in an essentially English tradition, indoor sets, and the whole thing being a little strange and quirky, rather than it all being super slick — gothic, if you like. It has a delirious quality, it begins with a dream and it never stops being a dream all the way through, it has the tone of an opium dream movie and I like that a lot. Its weirdness quotient is high, which does tend to delight me.'

'He said to me at one point, 'You're an intelligent man, why do you make these movies? They're disgusting and horrible'. And this guy was *selling* the movie!'



Filmmakers David Cronenberg and Clive Barker

Nightbreed only made $4 million less than *Hellraiser* at the US box office, and the latter's enormous success in the States was due in the main to its release on video, both rental and sell-through. Barker is aware that *Nightbreed* has another life and, more importantly, another chance of success, even to the point of contemplating the further exploits of the Breed. Is a sequel likely? 'Yes, partially because the video company are very interested, but if it does well on video then there'll clearly be an audience for it. Again, *Hellraiser 3* will probably be made at the beginning of next year and as long as those

David Cronenberg, cult director of Shivers, The Brood and Dead Ringers, took the opportunity to step before the camera to play psychopathic psychiatrist Dr Decker in Nightbreed. Here, in part of an interview originally intended for Clive Barker's book Nightbreed: The Making Of..., Cronenberg talks to John Gilbert and Mark Salisbury about psychotic performance art.

Despite a few brief appearances in his own films and a John Landis thriller, David Cronenberg had little experience of acting before his debut as Dr Decker, a fact which he readily admits. Yet he has a very positive approach to the craft. 'It's not like directing at all, and very disconnected from day-to-day production. You're off five days, let's say, and then you're called in to do a day, and that's not conducive to directing.'

movies are made for a modest budget there's no reason why they shouldn't continue, so yeah, I think there's a good chance there'll be a sequel. I'd be involved in it but I've just signed a two-picture deal with Universal so that'll keep me out of the running for a while.'

FRESH CONFIDENCE

That deal (which includes a science fiction film) will see Barker first directing a remake of *The Mummy*. 'All we're taking is the title, it will not resemble at all any mummy movie you've ever seen before. Mummys are not terribly interesting, but the idea of a mummy, something that's ancient and belongs to a civilisation and a culture that still remains largely mysterious to us, is. It will be a deeply perverse and dark movie. If anybody thought I'd given up my extreme pathological and psychotic moviemaking after *Hellraiser*, they had better think again. I'm going to the limits of the MPAA.'

Universal's courting of Barker and their enthusiasm for his work has instilled him with fresh confidence in Hollywood, but his desire to have greater control has left him with no option but to move to Los Angeles, relocating to America permanently as of next March. 'If I wasn't writing books I'd feel very distressed by all of this. But I'm still learning, this is not my prime profession, and I do need to educate myself.'

Threatening moment: Lori and Narcisse (left); Peloquin (right), starved of flesh

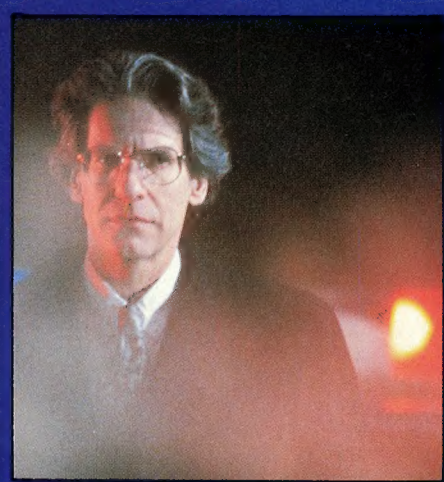
FACES OF DEATH

Did he ever feel that, when Clive gave him directions, they were wrong? 'You discuss things. Everybody makes suggestions, but it never quite happens the way you put it. I know, as a director, I rely on my actors to keep me honest about a particular character. Clive has got about 60 or 70 characters to deal with in this film and I only have to deal with one. So, if Clive would say, 'Maybe he'd pick up the cup of coffee,' and I would say, 'Oh, no, I don't think he would do that', well, Clive would listen.

'To a certain extent, Clive is going to trust my instincts as an actor, with that character, because that's the responsibility, to keep that character consistent through and through. On the other hand, you depend very much on your director to bring you into the movie at the right level.

'You never shoot a movie in sequence and the first scene I shot was a scene at the end of the movie, and that was my introduction to the character of Decker: I don't say a word, but it's a very complex scene. Clive has to tell me what level we're on for that, because he's the only one who's got the whole picture in his mind. My instincts might say, 'Do this scene in an hysterical tone,' and he might say, 'No, no, that's quite wrong, because you've gotta build up later to even more hysteria, so if you go totally to the top, you've got no place to go. It's really a collaboration that way. It never really gets to: 'You're wrong'.'

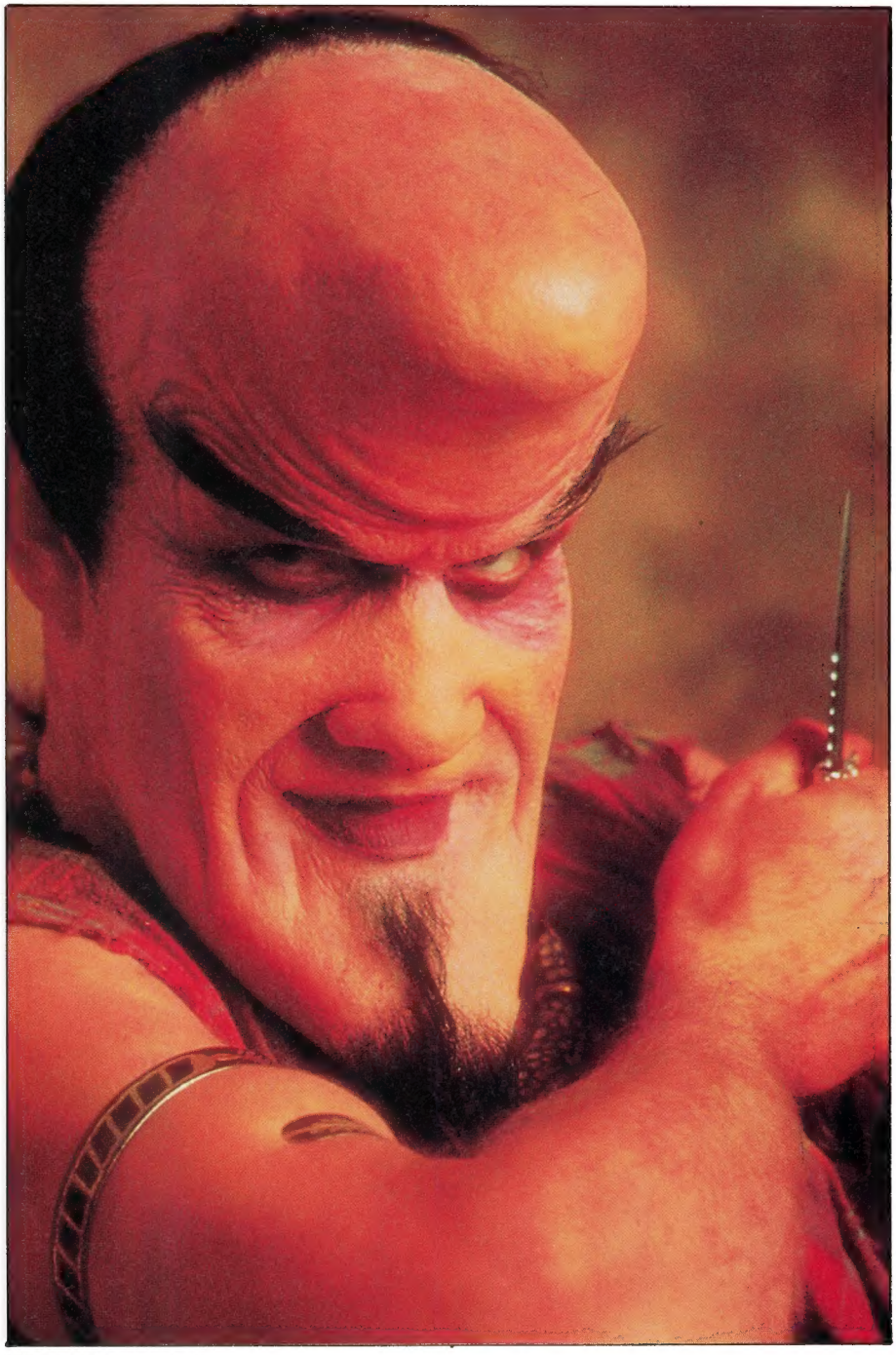
Both Barker and Cronenberg gained a somewhat jokey reputation for enjoying the death scenes on set — there *were* quite a few of them. 'A death scene is always a wonderful thing to do. Basically it's all play, it's like kids, and that's what's nice about it. You get on the set, there's a strange balance between the adult part of yourself which has to be obedient and punctual, and the part that likes to play. It's really exciting to be on the set as an actor, and primarily be expected to play, make yourself up and put on funny clothes. That's what it is, and that is my pleasure. It has nothing to do with real death or anything like that whatsoever.'



Psycho-killer: Cronenberg as the infamous Dr Decker

Fortunately — for the public at large — Cronenberg is not a Method actor, preferring to rely on an instinct for character rather than reams of information about cleanliness freaks or psychopaths. 'You're going to do your version of a psychotic. My interests and Clive's overlapped to a certain extent. We both could talk about famous psychotics of the past, and some of the future, so we really don't need that kind of input. I find that very inhibiting as a director or writer. I tend to invent my research rather than do it.'

Barker and Cronenberg: two film directors who have worked in the horror genre. Clive is obviously appreciative of David's work, but how does David feel about Clive's abilities as an author? 'There are certain similarities between what I do and what he does, and then there are some extreme differences. For me, it's the differences that are exciting rather than the similarities. We're both interested in transcendence through transformation, considered in a very physical sense rather than a metaphysical sense. Those are themes that we both return to again and again. But he is much more exuberant in his sense of invention and his creation of new mythologies without any rational explanation. That's where we become different: I would never create the Cenobites, for example, I would never create the Nightbreed. Those are the differences there, I think.'



Kinski: the man in the moon

THE SELLING OF NIGHTBREED

Stephen Jones, unit publicist on Hellraiser, Hellbound and Nightbreed, talks exclusively to John Gilbert about the problems with publicity on Clive Barker's monstrous pet project.

The unit publicist on any movie coordinates the set visits, interviews and stills while the film is in production. They have a unique eagle's eye view of the project, both in front of and behind the cameras, and journalists such as ourselves are indebted to them for allowing us to talk to the stars, director, and special effects crews.

Genre journalists are certainly beholden to Stephen Jones, who comparatively recently showed that film companies need to have a unit publicist who knows the subject matter and can push the film forward, against competition from blockbusters such as the Indiana Joneses of this world. 'I worked as a film journalist for ten years,' says Jones, 'and found that film publicity, particularly in the fantasy, horror and science fiction fields, was not good. There were closed sets, and when you asked for notes on the cast or crew when the film was in production the answer was, invariably, 'No'. There was need in the industry for someone to come in who knew the area.'

Until then, publicists had generally waited for the one week in which the film opened and then deluged the press with information. Too late, according to Jones, who strongly believes that information and stills released during production tempt press and audiences alike when release is nigh. 'We put a package together and sold *Hellraiser* very strongly during production. It was a new style of pub-

NIGHTBREED: THE VERDICT

'This was a bitch'n'... It's too good to describe, kind of like sex'

'Dude, it's fucking scary'

'You'll shit your pants'

'GOD!! This movie was God!!'

Selection of test-card responses to the final Nightbreed audience preview, Redondo Beach, California.

licity, creating a mood of anticipation for the audience who want to know about the make-up effects. It's no good telling them when the film's come out. They want to know six months in advance.'

That was certainly the case on *Nightbreed*, which had journalists queueing to get a glimpse of the sympathetic monsters, and the director who was, according to those press notes, breaking new ground with this epic. But, as production drew to a close, the budgetary problems arose and the paymasters, Morgan Creek, insisted on a greater creative say.

'When we first sat down at the end of January 1989, it was a much smaller film with a budget of about $7 million. But, a third of the way through production, everybody realised that the film was under budget. The costs spiralled to twice as much as the original budget, and we went from making a low to mid budget movie to a reasonably high budget film. There was also more control from Morgan Creek.'

The unit publicist usually relinquishes control over his thousands of movie stills and notes, giving them to the filmmakers, in this case Morgan Creek, and then waits for the phone to ring, and the marketing people to ask his advice. No such call came from Morgan Creek or Twentieth Century Fox. Indeed, Fox in America seemed to ignore even the guidance and advice from Clive Barker who was, after all, the director. 'Clive's vision of horror is, to my mind, unique, but they ignored it and said, 'this is yet another horror film, let's sell it this way'. The man spent two years of his life on this pet project, worked closely with the Fox people to create a campaign that involved the monsters, then they dumped it and he wasn't informed.

'There was also no American press showing. This is a long film, an epic monster movie, and when the filmmaker decides not to show it to the press, as if it's going to be dumped on the market, the coverage you get is already biased against the film.'

The film, however, appears to have withstood the gaze of European critics, whose verdicts are more or less favourably in line. The British arm of Twentieth Century Fox also appears to be more in tune with the movie, aiming to promote it with a photographic monster. Let's hope that the Bible's 'prophet in his own country' adage does not apply this time, and that the film receives a prodigal son's reception.

THE MEANING OF MAGIC

Clive Barker's next book, *Imajicka*, is, according to its author, another huge, dark fantasy tome and, unlike *The Great And Secret Show*, is very much an English novel. 'As *Weaveworld* stood to the story of the Garden of Eden, this stands to the life of Christ,' says Barker. 'It's about what magic is really for, and it's not for bringing rabbits out of hats. It's about the mythology that underpins all magical activity, and when I say magical I don't mean illusions, I mean magic in the sense of Crowley magick.

'I have been meeting and having very informative exchanges with practising magicians in this country and in America. I treat the occult very seriously, in fact more and more seriously, and have found great insight into what I do from these people.'

Mark Salisbury

DINE WITH CLIVE BARKER

FEAR competition

Can't get to a signing? You could have author and film director **CLIVE BARKER** to yourself for an evening of food, wine and conversation.

Clive has a busy schedule planned for the promotion of **NIGHTBREED**, and a new book to write, but he's been a friend of **FEAR** magazine since its first issue and wants to spend some time with one lucky reader. They will also pick up signed copies of **THE MAKING OF NIGHTBREED** and **CABAL**.

The **SECOND PRIZE WINNER** will receive an original penned Nightbreed illustration, signed by Clive, as well as the books mentioned above.

TEN RUNNERS UP will each be sent signed copies of the Collins' Making Of... book and Cabal.

Pretty powerful stuff, even for us. If you want to meet Clive Barker, just tell us:

Which medieval religious order was purported to worship the Breed's god of Midian.

Simple, huh?

Send your answers to BREED COMPO, FEAR, NEWSFIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1JW, [redacted] As usual, no employees of **FEAR**, Newsfield or Twentieth Century Fox may take part.